LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

SEPTEMBER 21, 1982

Printed for the use of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Serial No. 97-79

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

99-945 O WASHINGTON : 1982

H761-41

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1982

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:02 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Montgomery, Mottl, Edgar, Hall, Applegate, Leath, Mica, Martinez, Murphy, Dorgan, Hammerschmidt, Sawyer, McEwen, Dunn, and Smith of Oregon.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. We are meeting to hear from the American Legion concerning the organization's legislative priorities for the coming year. Certainly we would like to welcome all the Legionnaires, and some will be introduced in a few minutes.

I would like to welcome National Commander Keller and his charming wife, who I had the privilege of meeting a few minutes ago, to testify before this committee for the first time as national commander. He has testified before, but not as national commander before the Congress.

Commander Keller, since you have to be in the Senate by 10:30, we would like for you to summarize your remarks and your full statement will be put in the record, without objection.

I would like to also ask the members, if they could limit their remarks, it would give all members the opportunity to make comments to the national commander.

We have a new member of the committee and I will introduce him when he arrives. But at this time the Chair would like to recognize the ranking minority member, Mr. Hammerschmidt, for any comments he would like to make.

Mr. HAMMERSCHMIDT. Mr. Chairman, I have no comments at this time. Perhaps after the commander delivers his statement then I will make comments.

The CHAIRMAN. Fine. Thank you.

Now, it is our pleasure to have with us this morning one of our close friends, a Member of Congress who came to the Congress I think several years after we got here, but he has been here for a while, George O'Brien, a Member of Congress from Illinois. We look forward to serving with him again in the January session. He is a personal friend of the commander.

At this time the Chair would recognize Congressman O'Brien to introduce the national commander of the American Legion.

Mr. O'BRIEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Hammerschmidt.

It is a little bit like coming home to be here. I served on this superior committee for a time and I learned quite a bit from it. One of the things I learned is that the most effective committees in Congress are those that are genuinely and basically nonpartisan. I think this is an outstanding committee with respect to that Mr. Montgomery, and it is an honor to be back.

It is also a privilege to present a dear friend and a constituent, who is now the national commander of the American Legion. Born and raised in Peoria, he graduated from high school in 1942 at age 17 and immediately enlisted. He served with the 15th Air Force in Italy as a tail-gunner. We were neighbors, as a matter of fact. I was serving with the 12th Air Force in the same area. Apparently one slipped by him and he was shot down and was a POW for several months.

After the war he returned home to Illinois, where he was lucky enough to meet Genevieve. They were married at the university and he began his involvement with the Legion at about that time through Post 85. He came up through the ranks to become post commander and adjutant, and in 1958 he was the Illinois district commander, the youngest the State has ever had in that position.

He was elected to the Kankakee City Council, of which he is still a member. He has handled the accounting for several corporations in the area.

I would like to comment that this American Legion which he heads is the Nation's largest veteran organization, with 2.7 million members, and he has been elected to head that honorable organization for a year. He was elected August 26 at the Legion's convention.

If I were to oversimplify and just select a bottom line with respect to Al Keller, whom I have come to know and have deep respect and affection for, it would sort of reflect the three C's: he is competent, conscientious, and caring. The Legion will prosper under his strong leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Commander, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF AL KELLER, JR., NATIONAL COMMANDER, THE AMERICAN LEGION, ACCOMPANIED BY PHILIP RIGGIN, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION; CLARENCE BACON, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION; WILLIAM LENKER, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION; AND ROBERT LYNGH, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Commander KELLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Congressman O'Brien.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is my pleasure and honor at this time to have the opportunity to appear before the committee on behalf of the American Legion.

Before I begin my remarks, I wish to commend this committee for its dedication and leadership over the past 6 months during the congressional debate on the fiscal year 1983 VA budget. You can be sure that the American Legion is well aware of your efforts to protect the integrity of the entire program of benefits and services.

The American Legion also wishes to commend this committee for its diligent oversight of VA activities this year and its desire to move forward with several recommended improvements, especially in the areas of medical care delivery and veterans' employment.

Our specific purpose here today is to present the legislative goals of the organization during the coming year for the first session of the 98th Congress. We would like to highlight several of the points contained in the full text.

Mr. Chairman, any discussion of veterans' programs must start out with funding. The American Legion fully recognizes those fiscal problems which face the Nation at the present time. The American Legion and its auxiliary, with a membership composed of citizens who are all taxpayers, are well aware of the current economic difficulties and we support efforts to restore fiscal responsibility at the Federal level.

It cannot be said, however, although it has been implied in some quarters, that veterans' programs are consuming an increasing share of Federal dollars. The fact is that the VA budget for fiscal year 1983 will likely consume 3.2 percent of the total, as against 3.3 percent in fiscal year 1982, the year now closing. Ten years ago, during the height of the Vietnam war, the VA budget consumed 5 percent of the total Federal budget. These figures clearly show that as our Nation's most recent war fades into the background, its cost and the cost of previous wars is reducing at a steady rate.

In a drive to reduce Federal expenditures that has marked this session of Congress, veterans' benefits were not ignored. Of the various cost-cutting proposals put forth, both from the executive and legislative branches, the American Legion very carefully considered which would impact most seriously or unfairly on beneficiaries. In our conclusions, we opposed any essential reduction in benefits for the service-disabled or their dependents. We, of course, did work with this committee to determine the least damaging changes in benefit eligibility in order to comply with congressionally mandated budget ceilings. However, we will continue to resist any recommendation which negatively affects essential benefit eligibility.

Of all of the veterans programs, the veterans medical care program is the most perplexing. This is because of its vast scope and because it shares with medical care generally the problems of escalating costs associated with the delivery of high-quality care on a timely basis. We recognize that the veterans population will make significant demands on the system during the balance of the 20th century, but we must clarify one point: It is not to be anticipated that the entire veteran population will make demands on the system to a point of overloading it beyond its capacity to respond. The simple truth is that more than half of the veteran population has never applied for VA medical care and never will. Most veterans provide for their own health care as do all other citizens, through their own resources.

Another factor that must be kept in mind in responding to critics of the system is that the law provides for non-service-connected care to the extent that resources are available. In other words, the commitment to the provision of care is not an open-ended one, and the American Legion never expected that it would be. We have asked for, and will continue to support, a system which can accomplish its recently assigned mission as the primary backup during national emergencies.

The VA medical care system is a multibillion dollar capital investment belonging to the Nation, but it is an aging and deteriorating system. Changes in medical practice, aging structures, and a changing demographic profile of the veteran population requires constant and substantial investment in the renovation and replacement of the capital plant of the VA system.

The Administrator this year saw fit to undertake a revalidation of the VA medical construction program. Although the American Legion had no essential objection to the revalidation concept, we question whether the effort justified the creation of an entirely new layer of management control, especially when considering that the VA continually reviews future construction. Apart from those mechanisms of review, we are ever conscious that VA construction projects are subjected to oversight review by the several congressional committees, including this one. We have confidence in the diligence and the acuity of those committees.

In view of this committee's oversight responsibility for the VA medical construction program, we wish to make two specific recommendations. The American Legion believes that it would be most helpful if the Veterans' Affairs Committees would obtain, from the best sources available, a study of new modalities, some already proven, and some in the testing stage for treatment and care of aging persons. We suggest this because we are aware that the thrust in modern medicine is to treat the patient in a noninstitutional setting for as long as possible. Most of the new modalities appear to have great possibilities for the VA system. If they are found to be cost effective, as against inpatient care, and if they give longer and better quality of life to the VA's veteran clientele, then they are a worthwhile investment by the Government in its veteran population.

Our second suggestion is that it may well be time now for a congressionally mandated survey of the currently defined missions of each of the 172 medical centers. Many have not been redefined since World War II. A survey of the current missions of the 172 centers should, in our judgment, be done under congressional supervision to insure both its thoroughness and its objectivity. We would hope that veterans organizations could be included to assure representation from the consumer perspective.

I now wish to discuss some of the other major problems facing the veteran population and to which we hope the committee will give attention during the coming year.

We are now sure that the American people, including this Congress, want to do what is right in coming to grips with the Nation's responsibility for the health consequences of agent orange exposure. Throughout this controversy it has been the fundamental position of the American Legion that the Government of the United

States must be prepared to accept the consequences of its own actions, whatever those consequences may be, and whatever the cost.

We want the committee to know that the American Legion representatives have worked actively in all aspects of the agent orange problem with the VA, with the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, with the White House Working Group on Agent Orange, with other bodies within the Government and, most importantly, in counseling individual veterans.

The Vietnam veterans readjustment counseling program, otherwise referred to as the Outreach Centers, continues to have the complete support of the American Legion. We are aware that this program has the strong support of the Vietnam generation. To the Vietnam generation generally, the Outreach Centers are a visible manifestation that the Government that sent its Armed Forces to Vietnam cares about those who returned and who have not dealt successfully with the experience.

Mr. Chairman, for several years, in its annual presentation of its legislative goals, the American Legion has spoken to the committee of the special problems of the surviving veterans of World War I. The American Legion has a special concern for these veterans because they, in fact, founded our organization. We shall again present draft legislation in 1983 and seek to have it introduced which would provide a special pension for World War I veterans.

The Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1981 eliminated, for 90 percent of the veteran population, the burial allowance that had been provided to all honorably discharged war veterans. That was a mistake and, in the judgment of the American Legion, Congress should move to correct the mistake. The American Legion will again submit draft legislation in 1983 to reinstate the benefit, the one benefit to which most war veterans were entitled prior to 1981. While making this statement, we wish to recognize those actions taken this year to partially reinstate the burial allowance.

Unemployment rates for younger Vietnam-era veterans remain at an all-time high, far exceeding that of their nonveteran peers. Although officially there are more than 700,000 Vietnam-era veterans unemployed, it is conservatively estimated that more than 500,000 are termed "discouraged workers." This situation must be addressed at the Federal level with a comprehensive veterans employment training measure such as the one currently moving through the legislative process.

Our concerns center also on the disabled veterans outreach program, a program of proven value to all veterans. To remain efficient and responsive, the DVOP program must be clearly lineitemed in the Department of Labor budget, with adequate administrative safeguards administered by the Office of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment to insure that States are, indeed, using funds for the DVOP.

The issue of unemployment compensation for ex-servicemen must also be addressed promptly. That is why we have been working with the Finance and Ways and Means Committees to restore the UCX eliminated in the 1981 Omnibus Reconciliation Act.

We would also like to point out that, to our disappointment, there is no provision in the VA's fiscal year 1983 budget to fund the small business program authorized by Public Law 97-72.

It has been said, and the American Legion agrees, that no veteran is truly rehabilitated until he is economically self-sufficient. In these days of high national unemployment, the employment of veterans is of crucial importance to all of us.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we have presented some of the most important of the legislative priorities to our organization as we look forward to 1983. To repeat what I said at the outset of the statement, we, the members of the American Legion, have confidence that the distinguished members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee have a compassionate and concerned understanding of the problems and the needs that face the Nation's veteran population.

Thank you all again for giving us the opportunity to present our views at this time.

Thank you so much.

[The statement of Commander Keller appears at p. 17.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Commander. Thank you for that right-to-the-point type of testimony.

Speaking for myself, I generally support the issues that you have mentioned here this morning, especially the protection of medical care. I think our committee is totally committed to protecting medical care in spite of these budget cuts, to see that medical care, compensation, and pensions for the veterans and their families are preserved.

Also, about medical research, we are pleased to say that in this budget there will be an increase for medical research in the next fiscal year.

Before yielding to Mr. Hammerschmidt, I have several other comments. The new member, Mr. Martinez of California, is here. Marty Martinez, welcome to the committee. He took George Danielson's place, not only on the committee but also the seat from California. He has been asked to be assigned to the Compensation, Pension, and Insurance Subcommittee by the Democratic Caucus and, without objection, may Mr. Martinez be put on that subcommittee? There is a vacancy there.

Without objection, you will be put on that subcommittee.

As to the full committee, I ask unanimous consent that the full committee approve this appointment. It is numerically correct that he be put on this committee.

Are there any objections?

Mr. HAMMERSCHMIDT. Mr. Chairman, reserving the right to object—and I certainly shall not—I want to join you in welcoming Mr. Martinez to this committee. Marty, I think you will find that this committee, as the chairman has mentioned, is truly bipartisan and singularly concerned in giving veterans the consideration they so richly deserve. As a former Marine, Marty, I am sure you can appreciate that. Again, I am glad you're here today and I look forward to working with you.

I certainly have no objection, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Martinez, we run a tight ship here. This might be one of the few times you will get to speak. [Laughter.] So we would like to hear from you.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your comments. As a former Marine, I look forward to serving on this committee. It is one of the things I wanted when I was elected to the Congress, and I am very grateful that I have it. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Let me make two other comments. We enjoy working with the American Legion staff, Commander Keller, and we are glad to see a number of them here today.

Mylio Kraja, who is your Washington director, he is easy to get in touch with. National legislative director Phil Riggin—you might hold up your hands as I introduce you so the members know who you are. Also, we are very glad to have the veterans' affairs and rehabilitation director, Bob Lyngh, and we would also welcome Clarence Bacon and Bill Lenker.

I have noticed in the audience your national adjutant, Bob Spanogle, and also I have seen an old friend, Frank Hamilton, the former national commander of the American Legion. I don't know whether we have any other past national commanders here besides Frank. If you would introduce yourself, we would like to recognize you. I don't believe we do.

Let me mention that we do have some Mississippians here today and I wish they would standup as I introduce them. I am a member, as most members are, of the American Legion. P.O. Gibson from my home State, nice to see you. Ralph Godwin, Ralph is a close friend. Mr. O. K. Westbrook, and Mr. Clinton Davis. Thank you all for being here from my State.

I might say to my fellow Legionnaires from Mississippi, the reason Congressman Dowdy, who also is from our State, is not here this morning, he is talking to a group of Reserve officers back in Mississippi and he is sorry he can't be here.

Mr. Hammerschmidt.

Mr. HAMMERSCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Keller, we are delighted to have you before our committee this morning. Your statement clearly reflects the concern we all have for the security, welfare, and future benefits of the millions of men and women who have served this country so ably. I congratulate you on a concise and moving analysis of the many issues and problems facing American veterans today.

I also certainly agree with our chairman, that your Washington director, Mylio Kraja, has been of invaluable help to this committee, as have our long-time friends Bob Lyngh and Phil Riggin.

I, too, want to welcome Clarence Bacon and Bill Lenker and Frank Hamilton—and I noticed an Arkansas fellow out there, an old friend of mine, Claude Carpenter. I don't know if there's anyone else here from Arkansas or not.

Claude, would you stand up, please?

The representation that these men offer the Legion is effective and welcome in the Congress, and I commend you and the rest of the Legion for your assistance.

Mr. Commander, this committee is well aware of and sympathetic to the problems facing the American veteran. You are quite correct in outlining the key issues that will occupy this committee and others considering the future of veterans programs and benefits. These issues, VA health care, both inpatient and outpatient, meth-

ods of treatment and future of research, construction and review of VA facilities, aging studies, vet counseling, agent orange, as well as the balance of the problems you have noted, are all valid, Mr. Commander. They are high priority subjects.

As is typical of the American Legion's concern and determination, you have presented the very heart of the problem that this committee was empaneled to address and resolve. The Legion's concern for those who have served this country with honor and pride reflect the highest value of selflessness and humanitarianism. So, once again, I congratulate you for a thoughtful presentation.

It seems that we can never do all that we would like to do, and I don't suggest that your organization is asking too much, but we will give it our best. Under the distinguished leadership of our chairman, the Honorable Sonny Montgomery of Mississippi, I am confident that we will move ahead toward the solution.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Hammerschmidt.

We will operate under less than 5 minutes today so that all members will have a chance to be recognized. We will recognize the members in the order they came after the meeting had started at 9 a.m. Mr. Mottl was here from Ohio and he had to leave.

Mr. Nelligan of Pennsylvania.

Mr. NELLIGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't dare say too much because, as the chairman said, we run a tight ship. But I would like to welcome the American Legion here today, to you, Commander Keller, and your associates, and I would like to echo the comments of Mr. Hammerschmidt, that we will try our very best to do what we can to complete the program and accomplish your objectives as you have outlined them here today, and very well, I might add.

As you recognized yourself, these are days of fiscal responsibility, days when we are taking a look at the fiscal problems of our country. But I have always maintained, and will continue to maintain, that we must take care of our elderly, we must educate our young, but most of all, we must take care of those who fought for our freedom. I, and I am sure this committee, will do our utmost to be sure that our veterans are taken care of.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Jim.

Before the Chair recognizes Mr. Applegate, Mrs. Stolte, the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, we would certainly like to recognize her. [Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair would like to recognize the new chairman of the Compensation, Pension, and Insurance Subcommittee, Doug Applegate from Ohio.

Mr. APPLEGATE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Commander Al Keller and your officers. We welcome you here today. I certainly appreciate your very articulate, very candid, very forthright, and very outstanding statement on behalf of the Nation's veterans in expressing their needs.

I think you made one statement that I think is very good and needs to be stated time and time again. A lot of people think the veterans are always there with their hands out. They are not. Veterans, as you point out, the great majority of them fend for them-

selves. They don't want benefits. They are not welfare people. They have earned everything that they have gotten, and they have preserved the rights of each and every one of us to be able to sit in this august body that we do to be able to deliberate on the important issues of the day. So I take my hat off and salute the Nation's veterans and the American Legion.

I am sorry to say that George O'Brien isn't here because I wanted to give you a great compliment on George O'Brien because he has been a friend and colleague of ours and certainly has done a tremendous and outstanding job.

We extend our thanks to you and to the Legion for exhibiting such a continuing interest and concern in all matters of vital importance to our veterans. Your efforts and the diligence with which you represent all veterans is something for which all of the veterans and the members of this committee are grateful. After reviewing your outstanding statement, I trust that I speak for all of my colleagues on the committee when I say that the goals and the commitments of this committee and of the Legion are the same; that of seeing that past commitments to veterans are met and that present and future needs are identified and addressed.

Reading through your statement, you have certainly mentioned I think just about all that needs to be mentioned, some of the priorities. I would point out quickly that I am sorry that the study on agent orange seems to be delayed for some time on down the road in years to come, and I fear that this may be a cause of maybe looking at it from a financial standpoint. I don't like to see that. I think it needs to be addressed. There is a problem there. Agent orange is a very serious problem that has very seriously affected our Vietnam veterans. Also, the veterans who were exposed to radiation, it is so long overdue that this problem should be addressed. The World War I pension program I think needs to be looked at, and I think next year we are going to hopefully be able to address that more affirmatively than we have in the past. Veterans employment, educational benefits and medical care are all there and they are all extremely important.

I think if we are to remain true to our commitment to our veterans, we have to believe in the integrity of all the veterans programs, and they must be maintained. To fail in this is to renege on the most basic of promises we have made to the men and women who have served their country in peace and war. I welcome the legislative program that has been outlined, and I look forward to continuing to work side by side in our quest for the recognition and compensation to which we all owe all of our veterans.

Thank you.

Mr. EDGAR [presiding]. The gentleman from Ohio mentioned in his comments the issue of education, and just for the information of all members of the committee, H.R. 6794, the Veterans Employment Educational Assistance Act of 1982, passed yesterday under the suspension calendar. It is now in the process of moving toward confirmation with the Senate. This is the bill that passed this committee unanimously and commits ourselves to redoing many of the important areas of veterans employment services through the Department of Labor and the VA. It will be helpful to have that on the President's desk in the near future.

The gentleman from California, Mr. Martinez, is recognized.

Mr. MARTINEZ. It would be redundant to reiterate the things that have been said about support for the veterans and the commitment to them, but I think something I am very cognizant of is the commitment to those who survived is also a commitment to those who have lost their lives, and doubly, for that reason, we should do everything we can for those who did come back.

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you very much.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Murphy.

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Keller and my comrades in the American Legion, and the Ladies Auxiliary, it certainly is a pleasure to be with you this morning. Thank you for coming.

I have many comments, but I think I will confine the few minutes I have just to asking you an additional question. I followed with great interest your testimony on the medical care system. I have had an increasing number of complaints from the veterans in my district pertaining to the veterans hospitals—I suppose those nearest Pittsburgh, my home—about the standard of care, the treatment veterans are receiving or are not receving.

I wonder if you would advise us in the coming session of Congress, and perhaps this committee, to hold hearings on an investigation into the possibility of purchasing veterans' medical care from civilian hospitals as an alternative when we have instances of great complaint in our veterans hospitals.

Commander KELLER. Yes, Mr. Murphy, we will answer your question specifically. If you will allow me, I would like to call on Mr. Lyngh, the director of our VNR program, for any comments he may have regarding that question.

Mr. LYNGH. Thank you, Mr. Commander.

Mr. Congressman, as a matter of general practice, the American Legion has not supported any program that would commit the medical, the health and welfare of the veteran population to the private sector. Our experience throught the years has been that the maintenance of the VA system is the best health security that the Nation can provide.

If you are experiencing situations in the hospitals in your district involving a greater demand than the possibility of services that the hospitals can provide, I would suggest we would like to look into that because we are not aware at the present time that the system is overloaded. Most of the hospitals do have capacities available.

Sometimes it may involve staffing levels, construction programs within the institution, organization of the staff and other things that are, may we say, manageable. I would suggest to you, sir, that we ought to look in those directions before we address the formulation of any fundamental change in the present method of providing health care for veterans, which we think is the best possible system that the Nation can address at the present time.

Mr. MURPHY. I just dictated letters to my two colleagues, Mr. Edgar and Mr. Applegate, who Chair the subcommittees relating to this, and I will be happy to send you a copy of the correspondence and attach correspondence that I have sent to them.

Mr. LYNGH. May I add, if there is a genuine problem up there, we would be very happy to send one of our field representatives up

to do a site visit for our own organization and share the results of that with you.

Mr. MURPHY. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. EDGAR. Just in followup to that concern, I would like to commend the American Legion for their followup visits to the Philadelphia Veterans Hospital which has improved 100 percent in the quality of care in that facility and the management and services provided by the VA in Philadelphia. I think the American Legion's leadership in that area, of going into the hospitals and observing the rules and practices, has been very helpful and you deserve a great deal of credit in that area.

Mr. Hall from Texas.

Mr. HALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to commend the commander on what he said a moment ago. I agree with 90 percent of it. I think it is time that this committee did something about the World War I pensions. My dear friend on my immediate left, who is chairman of the appropriate committee, just said we were going to take a look at it next year. Well, if we keep looking at it and keep looking at it, there is no one going to be left to accept the benefits of a World War I pension. These men are dying at the rate of around 70,000 to 75,000 a year. They are dwindling rapidly. I would certainly urge my dear friend on that committee to take a good, hard look at that one program and try to come up with some definitive answers before the end of the next session of Congress.

One thing I wanted to ask you, Mr. Commander. You made reference to the Vietnam-era veterans, that 700,000 are unemployed, and then you stated it is conservatively estimated that more than 500,000 are termed "discouraged workers." Is that in addition to the 700,000 unemployed, the 500,000?

Commander KELLER. Yes, sir, it is.

Mr. HALL. Are the 500,000 employed?

Commander KELLER. Unemployed. It is 500,000 unemployed, in addition to the 700,000. They are discouraged workers who no longer attempt to work with the employment agencies in finding a place of employment in the community.

Mr. HALL. So you are telling us that 1.2 million Vietnam veterans are unemployed at this time?

Commander KELLER. That's correct, sir. Those are the figures that our economic division has given us to work with.

Mr. HALL. I am not going to belabor the point. I didn't know we had that many. I would still want to see more evidence of the fact that we've got 1.2 million Vietnam veterans who are not employed.

It is a pleasure to have you here today and we look forward to working with you in the remainder of your term in office.

Commander KELLER. Thank you, sir.

Mr. HALL. I yield back the balance of time.

Mr. EDGAR. I would mention to the gentleman from Texas that we were able to get an amendment setting aside a specific dollar amount of the CETA reauthorization bill, the so-called son of CETA program, which is targeted to meet the needs of the 700,000 who are unemployed. The 500,000 figure represents those who are

no longer seeking work because of discouragement and are out of the job marketplace.

I think there is also a third category that we haven't talked about, and that is the underemployed, those who are presently holding positions that are far below their capability and skill levels. In times of high unemployment, particularly 9.8 percent unemployment, there are a number of those persons who are in marginal and in many instances meaningless jobs that also force many of these Vietnam-era veterans to be highly discouraged about their future, their life immobilized in terms of buying houses and cars and putting their kids through school.

Mr. Dunn from Michigan was here earlier and had to leave.

I yield to my colleague from Michigan, Hal Sawyer.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As Bob Edgar, the acting chairman, mentioned, we got H.R. 6794 through the floor of the House yesterday, which deals with the disabled veterans outreach program and educational benefits, and it should help those programs.

I just might comment that this committee, I would dare guess, is maybe the only committee in the House that can regularly use the so-called suspension calendar. I don't remember, since I have been on the committee, having to take a bill through the regular calendar on to the floor of the House.

For those of you who aren't familiar with how that operates, if you can go on the suspension calendar, a couple of kind of bad things happen to you if you elect to go that way. One, you get a very short period of debate, 20 minutes on each side, no amendments, and the bill must pass 2 to 1. It is that last "2 to 1" that really makes it not very available to most bills that are at all controversial. The only other choice is to go to the Rules Committee and get a rule to get to the floor. Near the end of Congress, that gets to be a big log jam and you can't get bills to the floor, even though they might pass a committee. But this committee is just right in its own environment because we always use the suspension calendar because there is that kind of support on the floor of the House. We really don't have to worry about the 2 to 1 with a veterans' bill. So when this committee reports bills out, they are virtually assured of passage. As I say, in the 6 years I have been on this committee, I don't remember that we have ever used anything other than the suspension calendar.

I have two priorities myself that I want to see this committee get into in the next Congress that I think we have been delinquent in getting results. I don't think we have been delinquent, but we have not produced what I think we should have within the time frame that we should have. One is the World War I pension situation that we have been talking about since I have been on this committee, which we have not resolved, and the second is this Agent Orange problem, which I think a number of us thought was well on its way to solution to find out the Veterans' Administration and various contractees are still arguing and debating about protocols or plans on how they are going to conduct this study. I think the time is long past to get this done. I know I am not alone in feeling that during the next Congress we are going to see that that situation is resolved.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. EDGAR. Without objection, we will move that today, if you like. [Laughter.]

I think the gentleman from Michigan has focused in on the two areas that I think have been most troubling to just about every member of this committee. Hopefully we can get some action and get some funding levels particularly for both of those programs.

I would like to yield now to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. McEwen.

Mr. MCEWEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Commander Al Keller, it is certainly a pleasure to have you here today. I would like to welcome you and the members of the Washington staff. I feel they are performing a great service to our Nation's veterans and to this committee. Their commitment and resolution of purpose reflects the same kind of dedication which all veterans have historically given to America in times of national emergencies.

As you know, this committee has a special clientele. The men and women who have served honorably in our Armed Forces represent the epitome of the American spirit. Their commitment and their pledge of allegiance enables all Americans to enjoy the same freedoms our forefathers sought over 200 years ago.

Commitment is an important virtue. It is a pledge from one to another—a grateful Nation to its veterans. In reading your statement, I see that we share the same goals and have the same concerns for the welfare of our country's veterans. When this committee considers the next VA budget, you can count on our strong support to maintain the quality and integrity of veterans programs.

I want to thank you for your fine statement, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

I might just also point out that I was honored to receive at the Ohio Convention of the American Legion the American Legion flag, which is now prominently displayed in my office between the American flag and the State of Ohio flag. I want you to know that I appreciate it very, very much, and look forward to the continuing advice and direction from your Washington staff as well as yourself.

Mr. EDGAR. I yield to the Congressman from North Dakota, Bryon Dorgan.

Mr. DORGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am sorry that I was not here for your presentation, but let me tell you that there are a number of Members these days in the last day-and-a-half who are having special meetings and hearings on the rail strike situation and that is why you see people absent who otherwise might have been here. But I have had a chance to look through the testimony.

Let me say that in North Dakota we have a very strong American Legion. If I might, I would like to recognize Mr. Schafer from North Dakota, who I believe is in the audience. We have a lot of folks who we are very proud of in North Dakota, who work very hard on veterans programs. I think Mr. Schafer has been one of the State leaders in that.

In brief, I think if this country is going to have a strong and capable military in its future, then it also has to have a responsible

program for veterans. It is just that simple. This committee I think does a very good job seeing to it that this country cares about its veterans and enacts veterans' programs that make sense for the long term of the American veteran.

So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity for this presentation. Some of us are going to have to leave again because of the rail strike hearings. But I thank you, Mr. Keller, and I thank all of your staff.

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you very much.

Two members of our committee were here, Denny Smith from Oregon and Marvin Leath from Texas, who had to leave.

I would like to reiterate what Congressman Dorgan has pointed out. You have come to share your important statement at a time when Congress is very busy. We have 13 appropriation bills that have been backed up; we have a number of legislative concerns that are piling up on themselves, with an October 8 date of adjournment breathing down our necks. There are a number of Members who have other commitments. At 9 o'clock this morning the Public Works Committee was meeting and I had a subcommittee there. At 10 o'clock the Water Resources Subcommittee meets, and the Rules Committee is meeting. So it is a real circus here to move from place to place and meeting to meeting. We appreciate your patience in the midst of this kind of circus atmosphere. It is not really a circus but simply a confusing legislative process that backs up on us at the end of a 2-year period.

I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Chairman, I should have done this, and I apologize, when I was recognized before. I have four visitors here from my State and I would like to introduce them, if I might.

Norman Conn, a constituent from San Gabriel; Ben Hanson from Van Nuys; John Payne and his wife from San Francisco; and Frank Saletto from Eagle Rock.

Mr. EDGAR. Not to be outdone, Pennsylvania has a few delegates here, too. [Laughter.]

Jules Falcone from Wayne, Pa., is here, and also Ed Shardian from Upper Darby. It's good to see you both here today.

One of our colleagues has just joined us from the State of Florida, Congressman Mica.

Mr. MICA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have said for 3 years running, since I have been on this committee, that Florida's needs lead the Nation in needs for veterans, because we are one of the fastest growing States. Some 5,000 veterans a month are moving into the State of Florida, every month for the 36 months I have been on this committee. So as we look around this room and see people who are from all over the United States, I know that many of them will become residents of my State.

I commend you for bringing this program. I recognize the needs, and I do think in our own State and in our Nation we are going to have to give more emphasis to the programs that affect our veterans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. EDGAR. Thank you very much for your statement.

Mr. Commander, we again thank you for taking the time to come today. We were pleased in being able to hear your full statement

and we commend you on your work throughout the year. As those of us who are successful in winning reelection on November 2, we hope to come back and be able to help you again to make sure that the principles and goals of the American Legion are upheld within the halls of Congress.

Thank you very much.

Commander KELLER. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee.

[Whereupon, at 9:50 a.m., the committee was adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.]

APPENDIX

Statement of

The American Legion

1608 K STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006

by

AL KELLER, JR.
NATIONAL COMMANDER

before the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

on

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
IN THE AREA OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SEPTEMBER 21, 1982

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is my pleasure and honor at this time to have the opportunity to appear before the Committee on behalf of The American Legion.

The American Legion continues to be the largest veterans organization in the nation, representing as it does, more than 2 and one half million veterans of the four American wars of the Twentieth Century. With its Auxiliary of nearly one million women, relatives of war veterans, the Legion does in fact represent nearly four million men and women who have positively demonstrated their belief in and devotion to the United States of America.

That being so, we believe our voices should be heard in the high councils of the nation, and we appreciate the opportunity the Committee now gives us.

Our direct purpose is to present to the Committee, the legislative goals of our organization during the coming year.

Before I proceed to do that, may I pause long enough, to speak, for myself personally, and for the entire organization, in gratitude for the interest and concern for the needs of veterans, their dependents and survivors that is consistently shown by this Committee and its members.

Historically, The American Legion has looked to Congress as the champion of those causes that concern veterans. We are very much aware that members of Congress are the direct representatives of the people. And, through all the years, it has been our experience

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that Congress responds, more immediately and effectively than do the other branches of Government to the problems of those who have defended the nation in its Armed Forces. The American Legion appreciates that fact, and never forgets it.

May I now proceed to present to the Committee the principal legislative goals of The American Legion for the year of 1983.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BUDGET

Any discussion of veterans programs must start out with funding. The American Legion is well aware of the fiscal problems facing the nation at the present time. The daily newspapers have been full of the subject for the past two years. It is also apparent that no one has a fixed and certain solution to the overall problem. The American Legion and its Auxiliary, with a membership composed of citizens who are all taxpayers is aware of, and has felt the effects of the problem along with all other citizens. The American Legion supports the efforts of the general government to successfully solve the fiscal problems of the nation.

While that is being done, however, it is still necessary to fund veterans programs. The reason for that is that these programs have been established to deal with problems that pre-date the current fiscal crisis. The problems of veterans are the problems created by war. The programs to deal with those problems are an identifiable cost of war, and regardless of what else is said and done with reference to other Federal programs, the Legion must say categorically that veterans programs are not ones that can be sacrificed on the altar of fiscal austerity.

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It also cannot be said, though it has been implied in some quarters, that veterans programs are consuming an increasing share of Federal dollars. The fact is that the VA Budget for Fiscal Year 1983, as submitted by the President would consume 3.2% of the total governmental budget, as against 3.3% in Fiscal Year 1982, the year now closing. Ten years ago, during the height of the Vietnam War, the VA budget consumed 5% of the total Federal Budget. On the basis of that fact we base our case that as the nation's most recent war fades into the background, its cost, and the cost of previous wars is reducing at a steady rate.

The cost of veterans programs, in most instances, will continue to reduce. But all veterans programs, in the view of The American Legion, are viable programs that were established for a particular reason, to accomplish a specific purpose - and they must be maintained, if the nation is to be true to its commitment to the men and women it has sent to fight its wars.

The VA Budget, in both authority and outlays now exceeds $24 billion. It is not possible to fund veterans programs with less money. And in fact some of those programs are seriously underfunded, and we will be asking the Committees of Congress to make necessary adjustments to insure that all veterans programs can in fact fulfill the purpose for which they were established.

We will hope for the opportunity to make specific recommendations to the Committee concerning Fiscal Year 1984, when the President has sent up his Budget following the first of the year.

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BENEFIT ADJUSTMENTS

In the drive to reduce Federal expenditures that has marked this session of Congress, veterans benefits were not ignored. Of the various cost cutting proposals put forth, both from the Executive and the Legislative Branches, The American Legion very carefully considered which would impact most seriously or unfairly on beneficiaries. In our conclusions, we opposed any essential reduction in benefits for the service disabled or their dependents. We did accede to - we did not approve - several adjustments that would tighten up the actual payment of dollars. We did this, not because we believed it was right, but so that it cannot be said that veterans have not shared in the effort to bring Federal expenditures under control.

And may we pause here to say The American Legion resents statements made that veterans do not or will not share in the cost-cutting efforts of Congress. Veterans, in fact, have contributed their full share - first in performing honorable service when their services were needed - and in restricting their requests of government to what is right and fair. We invite those who disagree to show us any veteran programs that are not designed to serve a worthy purpose or fulfill a real need.

VETERANS MEDICAL CARE PROGRAM

Of all veterans programs, the veterans medical care program administered by the Veterans Administration is the most problem ridden. This is because of its vast scope and complexity, and

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because it shares with medical care generally, the problems of escalating costs that attend the delivery of high quality care on a timely basis.

Let it be said first that The American Legion will accept nothing less from the Government than high quality care delivered on a timely basis to the nation's sick and disabled veterans.

The provision of care to all those who were disabled in service is a responsibility of the highest priority for this nation. The provision of medical care, to the extent that resources are available, to all other veterans who need and seek such care is a decision made by Congress when it adopted the World War Veterans Act in 1924. It was a decision well made. Congress has never changed it, and The American Legion supports it completely as a decision that was justified by the time and circumstances in which it was made - and which have not changed substantially during the intervening years.

This nation has always said it does not want its war veterans languishing in charity hospitals when they find themselves sick and in need. That is a conclusion appropriate to a great nation and it has stood the test of time.

The cost of the VA medical care program now exceeds $7.5 billion per year - not counting the cost of the construction program. And, in the face of that cost, the Chief Medical Director has stated that the program has in fact been operating with decremental budgets for the past several years.

The fact of the matter is that while the VA medical care program continues to provide high quality care to more than a

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million inpatients and 18 million outpatients each year, the system is replete with problems. The problems are most certainly too numerous to attempt to identify each of them in this statement. It is our perception however, that they stem mostly from the fundamental problem of providing sufficient funds to operate a system, when the cost of medical care generally, is escalating faster than any other sector of the nation's economy.

It is true that the money problems that are affecting medical care generally, are complicated by the changing demographic prof le of the veteran population. The nation now confronts a number of veterans exceeding 26 million and ranging in age from the 84 years of World War I to the 32 years of the Vietnam generation. Dominating this whole population are the 12 million World War II veterans with an average age of 62.

The demands this population will make on the system during the balance of the 20th Century, are almost too massive to contemplate. At the same time, let us at this point make one thing clear. It is not to be anticipated that the entire veteran population will make demands on the system to the point of over-loading it beyond its capacity to respond. That allegation has been made, and The American Legion objects to it because it creates false impressions and tends to frighten those who observe the system from the outside.

The fact is that more than half the veteran population has never applied for VA medical care and never will. Most veterans provide for their own health care as do all other citizens, through

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their own resources. The National Academy of Sciences survey of 1977, which we believe still to be valid, established that, other than the service-connected, the active clientele of the VA system comprised about 10% of the veterans population, and that it was overwhelmingly single, elderly and poor - in other words, people who had no place else to go for care. Yet these are veterans - men and women, who have honorably served the country in war, and we do not believe the American people will turn its back on them in their time of need.

The other factor that must be kept in mind, in responding to the critics of the system is that the law provides that for the nonservice-connected, care will be provided - to the extent that resources are available. In other words, the commitment to the provision of care is not an open-ended one - and The American Legion never expected that it would be. No one knows better than we that the nation's resources are limited. We have asked for a viable system, designed and able to deliver high quality care - of its present approximate size. We do not want it to become any smaller than it now is, nor do we expect it to become much larger - other than in the event of another war - which God forbid.

At this point another justification for the present system should be mentioned - and that is the recent action of the Congress, designating the VA system as the principal contingency back-up to the military medical care system in the case of a national emergency. With that commitment now made, this is surely not the time to continue a debate as to the justification for the VA

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system. It is a known fact that the military medical program could not care for the first day's casualties in case of an outbreak of hostilities overseas - and in that eventuality, the VA system would immediately become an absolutely essential resource.

Having established the above premise, we must say again that the VA system, currently is replete with problems - ranging from the needs of an aging population, to the provision of care in a time of rapidly advancing medical technology that impacts daily on the VA system. The problems range the entire field of medical science, from the national shortage of nurses, that is impacting on the VA, to the provision of medical equipment, to the space problems occasioned by expanding technology in an aging capital plant and the rapid increase in the need for outpatient care facilities in hospitals that were not configured for this type of care when they were built - some of them prior to World War II.

A few specifics if we may, just to illustrate the range of problems that confront the system.

New Modalities of Treatment

New modalities of treatment are constantly coming into play. For example, the current thrust is toward outpatient care in lieu of inpatient care. Outpatient care is more cost-effective, and medical science asserts it is better for the patient to keep him in a noninstitutional setting. This trend leads to a whole complex of new modalities, such as hospital-based-home-care, to foster home care, residential living, halfway houses, etc. All of these programs cost money, but they save money at the same time as evidenced by a decreasing inpatient population.

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What VA needs to do right now is to forge ahead with innovative approaches to the practice of medicine for an aging population. VA can lead the way as the entire nation faces an aging population occasioned by ever increasing longevity. So that what VA is doing in this area of medical practice constitutes an additional national resource.

Research

Through the years, one of the jewels of the VA medical care system has been its research program. VA contributions to the advancement of medical science are a credit to the entire nation - and humanity everywhere in the world has gained from what VA has done in basic research. Yet the VA research budget in recent years has been increasingly underfunded. The American Legion has repeatedly protested this - so far to no avail.

VA cannot practice the best medicine without an adequately funded research program that will attract to VA service the best people in the medical field. Budget cutting in research hurts not only veterans, but all Americans.

When it presents its views on the VA Budget for Fiscal Year 1984, the Legion will again press strongly for an adequately funded research program. To do less, for this Government is penny-wise and pound foolish.

The Nurse Shortage

The nation faces a critical nurse shortage. VA needs to attract to its service its full share of the available nurses. To do so it must be competitive with the health care industry nationally. In recent years it has not been. To its credit,

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although late, and with the support of this Committee, initiatives have been undertaken, most notably the nurse scholarship program authorized by Public Law 96-330 (though it was delayed for two years by lack of funding). Competitive salaries and working conditions must be available if VA is to recruit nurses. It is obvious the best nurses will go where the best conditions are available. Veterans deserve nothing less than the best.

Over-the-Counter Drugs & Beneficiary Travel

It is a fact that older people require more medication. It is a national problem, impacting on Medicare and the limited budgets of people living on Social Security and veterans pensions. It is impacting VA as well. It is true that the cost of over-the-counter drugs for veterans has become a significant cost item in the VA budget. This leads to proposals to cut back. We certainly agree that strict medical management is necessary in this area, but it is also true that these drugs are needed by the poorest of the veteran population. To deny them is to create greater hardship. With strict medical management, this is still a budget item that must be met.

All that has been said about over-the-counter drugs applies equally to beneficiary travel. The inescapable fact is that the veterans who depend most on VA beneficiary travel allowances are the oldest and poorest of veterans. To deny them beneficiary travel, in many instances, is to deny them treatment. Such a thing is cruel, and we cannot believe Congress wants to do that.

These items are a favorite target for cost cutting by the Office of Management and Budget. We hope this Committee will not

look favorably on cost slashing recommendations in drugs and travel to the detriment of the aging veteran population.

Alcohol Treatment

Alcoholism is almost endemic among the American people. There is no reason to expect that it will not affect the veteran population similarly. In fact it does so. Alcoholism is an illness that is treatable. With current treatment available, lives can be saved and made useful. It behooves the VA to lead in the field of alcohol treatment, just as it has done in other fields, such as tuberculosis, hypertension, etc. Advances in the treatment and rehabilitation of veterans with alcohol problems will help the entire American people who share this problem with veterans. To achieve these goals, adequate funding for alcohol treatment, rehabilitation and research is essential.

Medical Facility Construction

The VA medical care system is a multi-billion dollar capital investment belonging to the nation. The fact is that it is an aging and deteriorating system. In the system are hospitals built before WW II. Many others, built immediately following WW II were not configured for the practice of medicine in 1982 and beyond, in addition to the fact they are aging structures.

Changes in medical practice, aging structures and the changing demographic profile of the veteran population require constant and substantial investment in the renovation and replacement of the capital plant of the VA system. We are talking here about large sums of money, but the money is being spent on a capital plant that will serve the nation into the Twenty First Century.

The Administrator, this year saw fit to undertake a revalidation of the VA medical construction program. In doing so he made some public statements that were, in the least unfortunate; some that he now says he regrets making. We regret he made them also, because it has placed the Legion in the position of rising to the defense of the entire VA medical care program that had been characterized as a political football. We hope the Administrator has learned more about the system now, and that he won't make any more statements like that.

The American Legion had no essential objection to the revalidation initiative. We were concerned about the time factor, and we questioned whether the effort justified the creation of an entire new layer of management control. It is our view that there are existing mechanisms within VA through which reexamination of the construction projects could have been accomplished without the assignment of additional high priced talent for that purpose.

In addition to available mechanisms of review, we are ever conscious that VA construction projects are subjected to oversight review by several Congressional Committees. We have confidence in the diligence and the acuity of those Committees.

What The American Legion did in response to the Administrator's initiative was to extract from our file of site visit reports by our Field Representatives, information relating to construction needs at the identified projects. We gave this information to the Administrator. Our information indicated clearly to us that almost without exception the projects developed by local VAMC Directors were reflective of actual needs within the system. We

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see continuing needs for clinical wings (reflecting the new emphasis on outpatient care), nursing home care units, storage space; need for more intensive care units, dialysis wards, continuing education areas - the long list of things needed to make the system truly modern and responsive to the needs of its clientele.

There is no question that more facilities are going to be required in the sunbelt states; yet population projections show there will continue to be veteran concentrations in the northeast and the north central states whose needs must also be met.

When the Administrator's report is made public it is our expectation the overwhelming number of the projects reviewed will be shown to be definitely needed by the system. There may be some changes that can be made to save money - although what is picked up in one place may be lost in another. Still, we believe the results to be expected from this exercise could have been just as well achieved with less fanfare, and less alarm among the veteran population nationally. We are watching closely to see whether any projects are cancelled. If there are cancellations with which we disagree, we will hope to bring our case to this Committee before any final decisions are made. One possible result of the Administrator's initiative, if it in fact is completed with total objectivity, is that the Administrator may learn more clearly the needs of this vast and intensely used system that serves millions of veterans each year.

In addition to our hope the Committee will give consideration to the matters discussed so far in this statement, we would like now to make two specific recommendations for the Committee to

consider. They are only two of many that could be made, but in our judgment both of them would help VA to come to grips with the problems it faces in responding to the needs of 12 million aging WW II veterans and 9 million Vietnam Era veterans, all of whom have a special claim on the attention and the active concern of this Government.

Recommendations

The American Legion believes it would be most helpful if the Veterans Affairs Committees would obtain, from the best sources available, a study of the entire range of new modalities, some already proven, some in the testing stage, for treatment and care of aging persons. We suggest this because we are aware the thrust in modern medicine is to treat the patient in a noninstitutional setting for as long as possible. Many ways have already been developed to do this. Many more are being tested. Most of the new modalities have great possibilities for the VA system. Some of them may require legislative authority. But if they are cost-effective, as against inpatient care, and if they give longer and better quality of life to VA's veteran clientele, then they are a worthwhile investment by the Government in its veteran population, plus the paths they may open for the overall problem of dealing with an aging population.

Congress now awaits a first report from the Geriatric and Gerontology Advisory Committee mandated by Public Law 96-330. The Committees might well consider instructing that Committee to proceed, with imagination and dispatch in the direction of reviewing and evaluating the new modalities being tried and developed in the care of the aging.

Our second suggestion is that it may well be time now for a Congressionally mandated survey of the currently defined missions of each of the 172 VA Medical Centers. Most of those missions were defined when the hospitals were established; most of them date from the years immediately following WW II, when the veteran picture was much different than it is now. It is our thought that many of these missions need to be redefined in light of what has happened during the last 37 years, and of what is happening even now as we discuss this subject.

A survey of the current missions of the 172 VAMCs should, in our judgment be done under Congressional supervision, to insure both its thoroughness and its objectivity. We would hope that veterans organizations could be included in it, to assure representation from the consumer perspective.

THE AMERICAN LEGION POSITION ON AGENT ORANGE

We move now to mention some other of the major problems facing the veteran population, and to which we hope the Committee will give attention during the coming year.

The first of these problems is the matter of Agent Orange. There does not seem to be any subject that is more urgent to the newest generation of veterans, or perplexing to the American people. We are sure the American people, including this Congress want to do what is right in coming to grips with the nation's responsibility for the health consequences of Agent Orange exposure. The difficulty is in determining what the health consequences actually are. That part of the problem is a scientific matter and can only be answered by scientists. When the scientific community has

provided its answers, then Congress must determine the proper action to be taken by the Government, to alleviate the health problems of the afflicted, and to compensate them and their survivors.

Throughout this controversy it has been the fundamental position of The American Legion that the Government of the United States must be prepared to accept the consequences of its own actions - whatever those consequences may be, and whatever the cost.

It is our intention, based on action taken by our recently concluded National Convention to prepare draft legislation, that we will seek to have introduced, that would assign to an independent scientific body the task of completing the study mandated by Public Law 96-151.

In the meantime, we urge the Committee to direct the VA to proceed with compassion, objectivity and a measured liberality to consider those claims now pending from veterans who believe their health was affected by Agent Orange exposure.

We know Congress has legislatively mandated VA to provide treatment to all veterans who have health problems that may be the result of Agent Orange exposure.

What are needed now are answers to the scientific questions concerning Agent Orange exposure. Only when those answers become available can all the problems relating to Agent Orange be finally answered.

We do not believe the VA is blameless in the frustrating delays associated with this entire matter. VA failed to see the

coming problem and when it did see the problem failed to act until Congress mandated it to do so. And even since PL 96-151 we have seen aggravating delays in preparing for and getting the scientific study under way. Indeed, now, three years following the Act, the study is still not started and we cannot say today precisely when it will be.

We want the Committee to know that American Legion representatives have worked actively in all aspects of the Agent Orange problem with VA, with the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, with the White House Working Group on Agent Orange, with other bodies within the Government; and most importantly in counselling individual veterans. Our effort has been and still is to be as helpful as possible to the veterans who are concerned about this matter. Our 700,000 Vietnam veteran members expect no less of us, and we fully intend to do no less.

VIETNAM VETERAN READJUSTMENT COUNSELLING PROGRAM

The Vietnam Veteran Readjustment Counselling Program, otherwise referred to as the Outreach Centers continues to have the complete support of The American Legion. This program is now operating fully. We believe VA is using the funds appropriated for it. More centers are opening regularly, and hopefully there are now a sufficient number of them to assure that most veterans with readjustment problems they cannot deal with through the structured resources of the agency have a center available to them.

We are aware this program has the strong support of the Vietnam generation. Information we receive from the field is that even those veterans - the majority of the Vietnam generation - who

are not themselves having adjustment problems, are keenly aware of their less fortunate comrades' need for help. To the Vietnam generation generally, the Outreach Centers are a visible manifestation that the Government that sent its Armed Forces to Vietnam cares about those who returned and have not dealt successfully with the experience.

American Legion Field Representatives visit Outreach Centers whenever possible during their site visits to VA Medical Centers.

We urge the Committee to monitor the functioning of the Outreach Centers, to assure appropriated funds are being used to provide help to all veterans who need and ask for it. We believe the monitoring is necessary because it is an unstructured program, operating outside the regular channels of VA control and management.

ADJUSTMENT IN SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES IN GI BILL PROGRAMS

While we are discussing the problems and programs of Vietnam veterans, it is important for us to point out to the Committee that the subsistence allowances for Vietnam Era veterans still in training - numbering some half million, have not been adjusted since January 1, 1981. As we know, inflation during 1981 was at 12%, and in 1982 ranged at about 8.9%. That is an impact of about 21% on the 1980 dollars provided for GI Bill education programs. Although The American Legion has suggested it, no action has been taken during the past 2 years to adjust the subsistence allowance rates to compensate for the inflationary pressures.

It is our earnest recommendation that the Committee come to grips with this matter in 1983. If the GI Bill education programs are worthwhile to the Government and to the veterans who use

them, then it is only fair and just that the subsistence allowances be realistic.

It might be added here that most educational institutions have been adjusting their tuition and fee schedules at the rate of about 15% per year. It is not difficult to see what this is doing to the subsistence allowances.

ADJUSTMENTS IN COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

It is our expectation that before it adjourns, Congress will send to the President legislation to increase the rates of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of the service deceased. We understand that will be at about the rate of 7.4%. The American Legion has supported this adjustment. We continue to believe the annual adjustments in these rates are necessary as long as the nation experiences the inflationary pressures that have marked recent years. We hope and trust the Committee will examine this matter again during 1983, based on the inflation rate that prevails in 1982.

We believe one thing most Americans can agree on is the fundamental obligation of the nation to look to the welfare of those who were injured or disabled in service, and of their dependents and survivors. The service disabled, and the survivors of those who have died have always been the number one priority of The American Legion, from the time of its founding in 1919. We appreciate the concern and attention given by the Committee to this class of beneficiaries.

WORLD WAR I PENSION

For several years, in its annual presentation of its legislative goals, The American Legion has spoken to the Committee of the special problems of the surviving veterans of World War I. The American Legion has a special concern for these veterans because they in fact founded our organization.

The veterans of World War I returned from France in 1919, 4.5 million strong. There are 400,000 of them surviving today, at an average age of 84.

The veterans of the first world war did not have a GI Bill, no home loans, no reemployment rights - in fact many of them returned to find their jobs had been taken by those who did not serve. Many of the benefits provided for veterans of later wars were, in fact, conceived and supported by the early members of the Legion, all of whom were WW I veterans.

Today, many of these, the oldest of our surviving veterans, are living at the edge of poverty - or below it. Their working years were at a time when wages were low, and many of them receive the minimum Social Security payments.

These veterans, for a long time have asked for a special pension, for their generation, recognizing their contribution to the nation. The American Legion supports that request. We have, now pending, a bill (H.R. 1153) seeking to provide a special pension for these veterans. That, and other pending legislation relating especially to WW I veterans, has not been considered by the Congress. In our judgment, hearings should be held, and this matter should be discussed.

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We shall again present draft legislation in 1983, and seek to have it introduced. It will provide a special pension for WW I veterans. We shall petition Congress that it be given active consideration in 1983.

BURIAL ALLOWANCE

The Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1981 eliminated, for 90% of the veteran population, the burial allowance that had been provided to all honorably discharged war veterans. That was a mistake. And, in the judgment of The American Legion, Congress should move to correct the mistake. Saving money is all very good, but saving money on war veterans' benefits should be done, at the least with foresight and some consideration.

In the first place, The American Legion has always believed in equal benefits for equal service. All those who serve their country honorably in war should be treated the same way. The burial benefit was one that did just that - it went to rich and poor alike. There was, of course, the complaint: some don't need it. For the other side of that coin, we ask the Committee to consider the fact that more than half the veteran population of 26 million does not receive any benefits from the government - never has and never will. Most veterans come home from service, resume their lives, pay their taxes and are never heard of again. They don't use the GI Bill, draw compensation, go to veterans hospitals; about all most of them are likely to do is use their home loan guarantee. And since most of them pay their bills on time, that benefit does not cost the government any appreciable amount. The one benefit that all war veterans have hitherto used is the burial benefit.

At time of death, their survivors used the $300 to help defray the cost of a decent and honorable burial. Is that really too much for this government to do for those men and women who have served it in war?

And, of course, no sooner was the burial allowance rescinded than there began to be cases of indigent veterans who were in fact buried in potter's field - the very thing the initial benefit sought to avoid.

The American Legion will again submit draft legislation, in 1983, seeking to correct this inequity. We petition for its active consideration by this Committee.

AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC LAW 95-588

The American Legion supported the adoption of Public Law 95-588, the Veterans' and Survivors' Pension Improvement Act of 1978, when it was adopted. The law was controversial in some respects, and supporting it was not the easiest thing to do. However, the Legion believed the new pension program would eliminate the inconsistencies and inequities that prevailed in the old pension plan, and that it would guarantee the greatest amount of pension to those in the greatest need. We believe our estimation has been proved to be correct.

However, most new legislative plans usually need some correction, and we believe that is the case with PL 95-588. It needs some modification, and it is our hope the Committee will take up the matter in 1983.

Specifically, the plan does not adequately address the needs of survivors - widows and orphans. The allowances for those

categories need to be improved. We came out of our 1982 National Convention with a mandate to seek to have that done. We will prepare draft legislation to do this, and seek to have it introduced next year. It is our earnest request that now, four years after the adoption of the revised pension program, the Committee take another look at it, and consider the adjustments we will propose.

We will propose substantial increases in the monthly allowances for surviving spouses and children of the deceased veteran, while maintaining a 10% differential between the survivors' allowances and those paid to the primary beneficiary - who is, of course, the veteran.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment rates for younger Vietnam Era veterans continue to remain at all time highs, far exceeding that of their nonveteran peers. Although officially there are more than 700,000 Vietnam Era veterans unemployed, it is conservatively estimated that more than 500,000 are termed "discouraged workers." This situation must be addressed at the Federal level with a comprehensive veterans employment training measure. As Congress moves closer to a new national employment training initiative, veteran concerns must be identified as a specific program, with sufficient funds to maintain an adequate program delivery system.

Such a delivery system of programs would work well within the already established office of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment of the Department of Labor. That office serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Labor on veteran employment

training matters. But that office must also become far more active and involved in veteran employment issues. Its field staff of State/Assistant State Directors for Veterans Employment must be given the program authority and control to actively immerse themselves in all aspects of veteran employment affairs.

Our concerns center also on the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, a program of proven value to all veterans. However, as funding for the program is part of the overall State Employment Security Agencies budgets, States have become resistant to the program's requirements. For an efficient and responsive program, the DVOP must be clearly line-itemed in the Department of Labor budget, with adequate administrative safeguards administered by the Office of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment to ensure that States are indeed using funds for the DVOP.

The issue of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemen must also be addressed promptly. Ex-service people who served honorably cannot be cast aside after their tours of duty, usually hundreds of miles from their home of record and usually with a family to support, without unemployment insurance eligibility. Unlike their counterparts in the private sector, military persons endure extreme personal hardships and sacrifice without the unilateral freedom to choose geographic locations and occupations.

We would also like to point out that, to our disappointment, there is no provision in the VA's Fiscal Year 1983 Budget to fund the Small Business Program authorized by Public Law 97-72. That law authorizes a $25 million revolving fund to provide small business loans to Vietnam Era veterans and disabled veterans.

We urge the funding of this program in addition to the VA's other budgetary commitments and appropriations. We hope and trust the Committee will address this matter in its consideration of the VA Budget for Fiscal Year 1984.

It has been said, and The American Legion agrees that no veteran is truly rehabilitated until he is economically self-sufficient. In these days of high national unemployment, the employment of veterans is of crucial importance to all of us, and we hope the Committee will be supportive of those programs designed to strengthen employment opportunities, especially for the younger generation of veterans.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, we have presented some of the most important of the legislative priorities of our organization, as we look toward 1983. We are, of course, interested in an entire range of matters relating to veterans and their families. We will hope for the opportunity to present our views in detail as the Committee proceeds to deal with its important responsibilities.

A list of the legislative goals that were set for the Legion by our recently concluded National Convention are appended to this statement. We commend them to the attention of the Committee.

To repeat what we said at the outset of this statement, we of The American Legion have confidence that the distinguished members of the Veterans Affairs Committee have a compassionate and concerned understanding of the problems and needs that face the nation's veteran population.

May we also say that The American Legion does not ask for or expect from the Government other than what is fair and reasonable, as well as fiscally realistic, for our nation's veterans. We will work with the Committee to achieve those goals.

Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to present our views at this time.

NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION RESOLUTIONS THAT REQUIRE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

POLICY

A COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR THE AGING VETERAN

1982 Convention Resolution No. 43 (DC) urges the Veterans Administration to plan and develop a comprehensive health care program and related services for the aging veteran.

OPPOSE ANY CONSOLIDATION OF VETERANS ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL OFFICES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 56 (NE) urges The American Legion to oppose any proposal, from whatever source, that would consolidate or centralize the operations of the Veterans Administration Regional Offices.

ADEQUATE FUNDING OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HEALTH CARE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

1982 Convention Resolution No. 112 (ND) urges the Congress, in its annual appropriations, to provide funds to enable the Veterans Administration to carry out a planned program of maintaining an up-to-date system of health care facilities, and one suited to its mission of providing medical services for the Nation's veterans.

OPPOSE LEGISLATION PROVIDING FOR THIRD PARTY REIMBURSEMENT BY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

1982 Convention Resolution No. 119 (ND) urges The American Legion to oppose the enactment of legislation providing for third party reimbursement of the cost of medical care provided by the Veterans Administration to veterans who are eligible for and apply for such care.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BUDGET

1982 Convention Resolution No. 126 (OH) urges the President of the United States and the Congress to give high priority to the budgetary needs of the Veterans Administration; and to provide full funding for all veterans programs authorized by law.

THE AMERICAN LEGION POLICY REGARDING FEDERAL SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 140 (OH) reiterates The American Legion Policy regarding Federal Social Security Programs, and shall not adopt positions relating to programs operating under the Social Security Act unless such positions directly affect veterans and their dependents as a class.

OPPOSE JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THE DECISIONS OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

1982 Convention Resolution No. 141 (OH) urges The American Legion to oppose the enactment of legislation that would amend 38 USC 211(a)

so as to authorize judicial review of the decisions of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

OPPOSE THE DELAY IN RENOVATION OR REPLACEMENT PROJECTS AT VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTERS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 181 (MA) urges The American Legion to continue to support the ongoing renovation and replacement program of the Department of Medicine and Surgery; and urges the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to proceed without delay to authorize and seek funding for the renovation, replacement, expansion when necessary, and improvement of the medical facilities of the Veterans Administration.

THE AMERICAN LEGION POLICY ON NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

1982 Convention Resolution No. 283 (GA) seeks to provide that any National Health Insurance legislation enacted by Congress should include the following: 1. That the medical care program operated by the Veterans Administration is recognized as one providing health care services exclusively for veterans, and it shall continue to be so maintained; 2. That a veteran applying for medical care from the Veterans Administration, to which he is otherwise entitled, and who, in accordance with existing law and regulations, is required to state his inability to pay for his own care, shall not be required to consider, in making such statement, any medical benefits that would accrue to him under the provisions of a Federal Health Care Act; and, 3. That if the provisions set forth in 1 and 2 are included in a Federal Health Care Act, then The American Legion shall make no objection to any section of the Act, or to any other provision of law providing for reimbursement to the Veterans Administration, for cost of treatment rendered a veteran for nonservice-connected disabilities, from benefits to which the veteran may be entitled under a Federal Health Care Act.

CABINET RANK FOR ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 284 (GA) seeks legislation so as to make the Veterans Administration an Executive Department.

OPPOSE MERGING THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION WITH ANY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY

1982 Convention Resolution No. 385 (NY) urges The American Legion to exert every effort, influence and resource available to assure rejection of any administrative or legislative proposal that would merge the administration and payment of veterans benefits from the Veterans Administration with those administered by the Social Security Administration or any other Federal agency.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION NURSE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

1982 Convention Resolution No. 393 (WI) urges The American Legion to support the establishment of innovative and stimulating

programs, and other benefits that would attract nurses into the VA service; and urge Congress to fund the Nurse Scholarship Program established under Public Law 96-330, for Fiscal Year 1983 and the outyears.

THE AMERICAN LEGION POLICY ON RADIATION EXPOSURE CASES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 409 (IA) urges the Executive Branch, including the Secretaries of Defense and Energy, to ensure the cooperation of their respective agencies in making available all existing records and information pertaining to atmospheric nuclear weapon tests; and urges the Administrator to promulgate regulations and issue additional specific guidelines for the proper development and adjudication of claims involving disabilities resulting from exposure to radiation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION POLICY ON AGENT ORANGE

1982 Convention Resolution No. 410 (IA) seeks legislation as would assign the responsibility of conducting the epidemiological study of Vietnam veterans who were exposed to any of the class of chemicals, including Agent Orange, to an independent agency; establish a mechanism for presumption of service connection for certain disabilities traced to Agent Orange exposure; that The American Legion closely monitor the development of all ongoing research of the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure; that The American Legion disseminate the most current information on Agent Orange; and, that The American Legion continue to make careful observation of the Veterans Administration's Agent Orange examination program.

OPPOSE CONTRACTING OUT OF SERVICES IN VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CARE FACILITIES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 411 (IA) urges that The American Legion shall vigorously oppose Veterans Administration contracting out of those services or activities deemed essential for retention in Veterans Administration medical care facilities in order to insure the timely delivery of quality health care to the Nation's eligible veterans.

NATIONAL CEMETERIES

THE AMERICAN LEGION POLICY ON IMPROVING THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM AND DEATH AND BURIAL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 384 (NY) seeks legislation to provide contract burials for veterans who are indigent at time of death; to restore the former burial allowance for all veterans; support necessary funding providing for the construction of columbaria and mausoleums wherever feasible; and, urge the Veterans Administration to establish additional national cemeteries wherever the need for them is apparent.

MEDICAL AND HOSPITALS

DIRECT ADMISSION TO PRIVATE HOSPITALS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS

1981 Fall NEC Resolution No. 19 seeks legislation to permit direct admission to a private hospital, on an emergency basis, for certain veterans of the Mexican Border period and of World War I.

DIRECT ADMISSION OR TRANSFER FROM A PRIVATE HOSPITAL TO A NURSING HOME

1981 Fall NEC Resolution No. 20 seeks legislation to permit the direct admission or transfer from a private hospital to a nursing home of certain veterans of the Mexican Border period and of World War I.

RESTORE THE GRANTS-IN-AID PROGRAM TO THE VETERANS MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER IN THE PHILIPPINES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 9 (PI) urges The American Legion to support legislation so as to restore the authority for the United States to pay hospital care, medical services, nursing home care, available medicines, medical supplies and equipment for Commonwealth Army Veterans and New Philippine Scouts who have incurred service-connected or nonservice-connected disabilities.

PERMIT THE USE OF FUNDS BY STATE VETERANS HOMES IN ACQUIRING CERTAIN FACILITIES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 74 (CO) urges The American Legion to support legislation that would permit the use of Veterans Administration funds by States in the acquisition and rehabilitation of facilities not presently owned by such States, to be used as State Veterans Homes.

INCREASE PER DIEM RATES TO STATE VETERANS HOMES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 144 (SD) urges The American Legion to support an annual review and revision of the rates of reimbursement by the Veterans Administration for the care provided veterans in State Veterans Homes.

ADEQUATE FUNDING OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 396 (WI) urges the Congress to authorize adequate budget funding in the current fiscal year and in future years of the Veterans Administration medical research programs.

PROVIDE CERTAIN BENEFITS TO CANADIAN VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 450 (MN) seeks legislation to provide that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs may provide benefits to Canadian Armed Forces veterans, equal to those presently

provided by the Dominion of Canada, to veterans of our Armed Forces residing in the Dominion of Canada.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR STATE VETERANS HOMES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 451 (MN) urges The American Legion to support legislation to provide that adequate funding be appropriated for the construction, remodeling and renovating of State Veterans Homes.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INCREASE IN MONTHLY PAYMENTS FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 130 (OH) seeks legislation so as to increase the amounts payable under Chapter 34 of title 38, United States Code, by an amount equal to increases in the Consumer Price Index since January 1, 1981.

INSURANCE

PROVIDE MORTGAGE LIFE INSURANCE FOR CERTAIN SERVICE-CONNECTED VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 80 (CO) urges The American Legion to support legislation to provide mortgage life insurance for those veterans unable to acquire commercial life insurance because of service-connected disabilities.

SPECIAL GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE FOR VIETNAM ERA VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 292 (CA) urges The American Legion to support legislation to amend 38, USC, Chapter 19, so as to provide a Special Government Life Insurance Program for Vietnam Era veterans.

CLAIMS AND RATING

INCREASE PAYMENTS TO CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

1981 Fall NEC Resolution No. 13 urges The American Legion to support legislation so as to increase the monthly payment made to those individuals entered on the Congressional Medal of Honor Roll from $200 to $300.

PAYMENT OF A CLOTHING ALLOWANCE TO VETERANS WITH COMPENSABLE SKIN CONDITIONS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 58 (NE) seeks legislation as would pay a clothing allowance to any veteran with a compensable skin condition when it is determined there is clothing spoilage due to the use of prescribed medications.

ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT PAYMENTS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 99 (OK) seeks legislation so as to remove the restriction against the receipt of Armed Forces retirement pay, due to length of service, concurrently with VA compensation.

INCREASE MONTHLY RATES OF DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

1982 Convention Resolution No. 290 (CA) urges The American Legion to support legislation to increase the monthly rates of dependency and indemnity compensation.

RESTORE THE PAYMENT OF BURIAL ALLOWANCE AND INCREASE THE AMOUNT PAYABLE

1982 Convention Resolution No. 394 (WI) seeks legislation to restore the payment of burial allowance for all veterans who have served honorably in time of war or national emergency; oppose any effort to associate with or substitute the veterans burial allowance with the Social Security burial allowance; and, increase the burial allowance for veterans to $400 plus the $150 plot allowance.

PAYMENT OF A BURIAL ALLOWANCE TO VETERANS WHO DIE IN PRIVATE NURSING HOMES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 401 (IA) urges The American Legion to take exception to the decision of the Veterans Administration to deny payment of the burial allowance to a veteran who dies in a private nursing home while under a VA contract.

IMPROVE THE DISABILITY COMPENSATION PROGRAM

INCREASE MONTHLY RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION

1982 Convention Resolution No. 59 (NE) urges The American Legion to support legislation to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation.

OPPOSE ANY PROPOSALS TO WEAKEN THE DISABILITY COMPENSATION PROGRAM

1982 Convention Resolution No. 78 (CO) urges The American Legion to oppose any proposal to weaken the disability compensation program or dilute benefits payable to disabled veterans under laws and regulations administered by the Veterans Administration.

INCREASE THE PAYMENT OF SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 79 (CO) seeks legislation to increase by a reasonable amount the maximum payment of specially adapted housing assistance for service-connected veterans who have

suffered the loss or loss of use of both upper extremities and for certain service-connected blind veterans.

PROVIDE A SEVEN YEAR PRESUMPTION FOR SYRINGOMYELIA

1982 Convention Resolution No. 136 (OH) seeks legislation to provide that Syringomyelia developing a 10 per centum degree of disability or more within seven years from the date of separation from a period of war service shall be considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by such service.

PROVIDE A TWO YEAR PRESUMPTION FOR PSYCHOSIS FOR THE PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION

1982 Convention Resolution No. 137 (OH) seeks legislation to provide that any veteran who served ninety days or more in a war period and develops a psychotic condition manifest to a degree of 10% or more within two years from date of separation from service shall be eligible not only for medical treatment and hospitalization, but also for compensation.

ADD THE LOSS OF ONE LUNG OR ONE KIDNEY TO THE LIST OF ANATOMICAL LOSS OR LOSS OF USE DISABILITIES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 291 (CA) seeks legislation to add one lung or one kidney to the list of anatomical loss or loss of use disabilities, which now includes creative organs, feet, hands, buttocks, sight and hearing.

PROTECTION OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION RATINGS IN EFFECT FOR 10 YEARS OR MORE

1982 Convention Resolution No. 294 (CA) seeks legislation to provide that any disability which has been continuously rated at or above any evaluation for ten or more years for compensation purposes shall not thereafter be rated at less than such evaluation.

IMPROVE THE DEATH AND DISABILITY PENSION PROGRAM

SPECIAL PENSION PROGRAM FOR WORLD WAR I VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 282 (GA) seeks legislation to amend title 38, USC, so as to provide a special pension program for veterans of World War I.

INCREASE PENSION FOR HOSPITALIZED VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 408 (IA) seeks legislation to increase the amount of pension payable to certain veterans who are being furnished domiciliary, hospital, or nursing home care from $60 to $75 per month.

IMPROVE THE PENSION PROGRAM FOR VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 489 (NY) urges The American Legion to sponsor and support legislation to amend title 38, USC, Chapter 15, to further improve the disability and pension program for veterans and their dependents.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION RESOLUTIONS
THAT REQUIRE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

GENERAL EMPLOYMENT

APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

1982 Convention Resolution No. 20 (LA) urges That The American Legion ask Congress to appropriate funds specifically earmarked for the use of the office of the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment to design, implement and monitor manpower training programs to meet the unemployment and underemployment needs of veterans.

FLEXIBLE PLACEMENT FOR DISABLED VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM

1982 Convention Resolution No. 51 (NE) urges legislation to provide the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment with authority to place DVOP staff, when warranted for the greater efficiency, at any time, and in any number, in offices other than local state employment security agency offices.

TRANSFER OFFICE OF VETERANS REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS TO THE OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

1982 Convention Resolution No. 85 (OK) urges the transfer of the Office of Veterans Reemployment Rights, including currently assigned personnel, to the direct control and authority of the Office of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment; and, that sufficient funds be provided the Office of Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment to maintain an adequate staff and program level within the Office of Veterans Reemployment Rights.

FUNDS FOR THE OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

1982 Convention Resolution No. 257 (ME) urges that the Office of Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment, U.S. Department of Labor, be fully funded to carry out its mission as prescribed by law and regulation.

INCREASE IN STAFF FOR STATE EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 261 (PA) urges that Congress and the Department of Labor be requested to support an increase of

positions in the State Employment Services to a number commensurate with the increase in the labor force so that an effective employment service, including employment services to veterans, can be maintained.

DESIGNATE A WEEK IN MARCH AS "NATIONAL EMPLOY THE OLDER WORKER WEEK"

1982 Convention Resolution No. 368 (UT) urges The American Legion petition the Congress to adopt a Joint Resolution requesting the President of the United States to issue a Proclamation: (1) designating the second full week in March of each year as "National Employ the Older Worker Week"; and (2) calling upon employer and employee organizations, other organizations concerned with employment, and the citizens of the United States in general to observe such a week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs designed to bring about the elimination of discrimination in employment because of age.

OPPOSE ANY CHANGES IN THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT HAVING AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON VETERANS

1982 Convention Resolution No. 389 (WI) urges The American Legion to oppose any changes in the Wagner-Peyser Act that may adversely affect veterans.

DISABLED VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM

1982 Convention Resolution No. 461 (WA) urges the Congress and the Department of Labor to provide the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program with specific and separate line item budget requests; and that the office of Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment be urged to implement an effective administrative control mechanism to ensure Disabled Veterans Outreach Program funds are utilized for the intended purpose.

RETAIN THE TWO-YEAR RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT FOR STATE AND ASSISTANT STATE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVES

1982 Convention Resolution No. 495 (WY) urges The American Legion to oppose any change in the two-year residency requirement for appointment of State and Assistant State Veterans Employment Representatives as now required by law.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FOR EX-SERVICEMEN

1982 Convention Resolution No. 383 (NY) urges The American Legion to oppose the elimination of unemployment compensation for ex-servicemen eligible for reenlistment; and seeks legislation to amend section 6521, title 5, United States Code, to allow ex-service persons to collect unemployment compensation.

VETERANS PREFERENCE AND FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT

SUPPORT VETERANS PREFERENCE IN FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT

1982 Convention Resolution No. 241 (AL) urges The American Legion to strongly support veterans preference in Federal employment as provided by a grateful nation, and oppose any efforts to reduce this preference.

TREASURY BOND PROGRAMS

SUPPORT THE UNITED STATES SAVINGS BOND PROGRAM

1982 Convention Resolution No. 298 (TX) urges The American Legion to continue its support of the United States Savings Bond program, and that its individual and group effort be used to assist in effecting the success of this program; and, support any necessary legislation that will enable the U.S. Savings Bond program to continue to be of financial benefit to bond purchasers, as well as an expression of patriotic support of our Nation.

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